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EPA sets drive to remove dioxin

By James Worsham
Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON—The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday announced a major national program to clean up sites contaminated by dioxin, a highly toxic chemical. It will begin with soil testing in a number of Mid-west states, including Illinois.

Calling dioxin "one of the most perplexing and potentially dangerous chemicals ever to pollute the environment," Alvin Alm, deputy EPA administrator, said the new strategy is aimed at avoiding problems such as those at Love Canal near Niagara Falls, N.Y., and at Times Beach, Mo., where dioxin has been found in soil or water and where people have been forced to leave their homes.

Alm said initial agency efforts will focus on sites where dioxin contamination has been found or where it is strongly suspected. A spokesman for the regional EPA office in Chicago said the initial testing in Illinois will focus on sites in Sauget, east of St. Louis, where state testing has revealed



Alvin Alm

dioxin in the soil.

IN WASHINGTON, the EPA said its efforts will focus on the 1 of the 75 types of dioxin that is considered to be the most toxic—2,3,7,8-TCDD or 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p dioxin. Dioxin is a byproduct in the manufacture of

certain chemicals that are elements of herbicides, including Agent Orange, a defoliant used during the Vietnam War.

The effect of dioxin on humans is not completely clear, but research has shown that one dose of less than one-millionth of a gram will kill a guinea pig. The chemical also produces cancer, birth defects and liver problems in laboratory animals. Veterans groups have charged that soldiers exposed in Vietnam have contracted cancers and their children have birth defects.

Alm said the EPA does not expect to resolve the dioxin problem quickly.

"It will take a long time before all of the contamination is cleaned up and properly disposed," he said. The soil testing will be accompanied by research by the agency on the best ways to clean up sites that have dioxin contamination, he said.

UNDER THE program announced Thursday, the EPA will test soil and then identify and

Continued on page 2, col. 1



AP Wirephoto

Edwin Meese reviews his speech at a luncheon Thursday.

Israel shells PLO; Arafat



Was Scrooge unfair? Humbug! Meese says

AP Wirephoto

elevated train platforms in the community to see whether high school students are coming to the school from the city.

Millikin said Proviso East deans rode buses and elevated trains last week from the city in a spot check that has led them to investigate the residences of 22 students.

State law says the student, plus a parent or guardian, must live in the school district. But the law also permits nonresident students if they pay a tuition fee.

PALMER SAID Thornton's tuition policy was adopted to give nonresidents an opportunity to enroll in the system, an option not available before. But officials in other districts

RTA buses usually not used by district students, Palmer said.

Truant officers discovered that 18 students shouldn't be going to district schools after they checked at the homes where they said they lived and found that the places were not their residences.

ONE OF THE suburbs' more extensive systems for checking student residency is that of Oak Park-River Forest. Walker said officials will routinely cross-check telephone directory listings against the students' registration forms. In addition, a residence will be investigated if a routine mailing to the student's home address is returned by the U.S. Postal Service.

Dioxin

Continued from page 1

rank dioxin sites based on how much danger they pose.

The agency first will test at sites where 2,4,5-TCP is produced, where waste from that production is disposed and where it is used in the production of 2,4,5-T, a common herbicide and an ingredient of Agent Orange. Alm said these categories of sites probably would contain 80 to 90 percent of the dioxin contamination in the nation.

After this, he said, the agency will test at incinerators where dioxin may be a byproduct and at sites where herbicides contaminated with dioxins were used.

Alm declined to identify sites

where the agency will test soil, but a spokesman said later that announcements will be made once decisions are made where to test.

BUT THE AGENCY has been assessing reports of contamination at "at least" 33 sites in Missouri, including Times Beach; the Love Canal area near Niagara Falls; the land and waterways around the Dow Chemical plant in Midland, Mich.; the Clayton Chemical site in Sauget; and sites in New Jersey and Arkansas.

Herbicides containing dioxin have been an issue at the EPA for a number of years. In 1979, the agency suspended the use of 2,4,5-T and silvex, another herbicide, for use in forests, home gardens and on aquatic vegetation, but it allowed the continued use for range land, rice and sugar cane.

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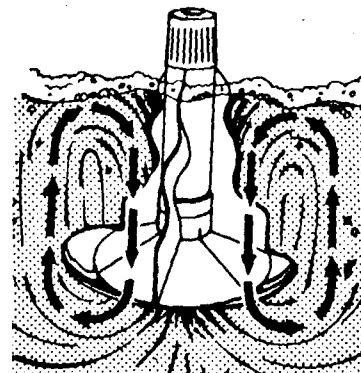
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